

## District Court Judge with Honorable Nicholas S. Ayoub, 61st District Court

### Keywords

**Attorney** – A professional who has earned a law degree, passed the bar exam, and is licensed by the State Bar of Michigan to practice law in the state. Also known as a lawyer.

**Circuit Court** – A trial court that handles felonies (serious crimes); civil lawsuits over \$25,000; and family matters, such as divorce, child custody, adoptions, child protective proceedings, juvenile delinquency, and personal protection orders. Circuit Courts also hear cases appealed from lower courts.

**Civil Cases** – Noncriminal cases between two or more parties, often involving money.

**Crime** – Violation of criminal law punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine and/or costs (money).

**Dispute** – A disagreement between two or more people or groups of people, called parties.

**District Court** – A trial court that handles civil suits involving up to \$25,000; adult criminal misdemeanor offenses; civil infractions; landlord/tenant disputes; small claims; ordinance and charter violations; and land contract forfeitures. Additionally, all adult criminal proceedings begin in the District Court. In carrying out this function, the District Court issues arrest and search warrants, sets bail, accepts bonds, conducts arraignments and probable cause conferences, and presides over preliminary examinations.

**Insurance Cases** – Civil cases involving disputes related to insurance, a contract in which the insured pays money to a company that promises to pay money back if certain losses such as illness or property damage happen. Common types of insurance include health insurance, automobile insurance, and homeowner's insurance.

**Judge** – A judge is an elected official given authority to make decisions in civil and criminal proceedings in a court of justice. To serve in the state's judicial branch of government, a judge must be admitted to the practice of law for at least five years and be less than 70 years old at the time of election or appointment (to fill a vacancy). A justice is a judge of a supreme court.

**Jury** – Members of a community chosen to decide the facts of a case in a trial court. For more information see [Best of Justitia: Jury Service](#) (PDF).

**Law School** – A three-year course of study after earning a bachelor's (undergraduate) degree; schools must be accredited (officially approved) by the American Bar Association.

**Trial Court** – The level of courts where the facts of a case are decided. Most cases start and stop here. In Michigan, district court, probate court, and circuit court are all trial courts.

For more definitions, see the Michigan Judicial Institute's [Handbook of Legal Terms](#).